

A New Species of Fish Described from the Flower Garden Banks



January 29, 2008--The description of a species of coral reef wrasse that is new to science has been published in the December 2007 issue of the journal *Copeia*. The article, written by former Flower Garden Banks National Marine Sanctuary (FGBNMS) research specialist Doug Weaver and co-author Luis Rocha is titled: "A new species of *Halichoeres* (*Teleostei: Labridae*) from the western Gulf of Mexico" (*Copeia* 2007(4): 798-807).

This species was nicknamed the "Mardi Gras wrasse" by sanctuary staff due to the bright purple, yellow and green coloration of the terminal male phase. As is typical of wrasses, the juvenile and non-terminal phases of this species are a completely different color. In this case, they are red with a white stripe running from nose to tail.

The fish was originally discovered at East Flower Garden Bank by members of the Reef Environmental Education Foundation (REEF) in 1997, and has been periodically observed (primarily at Stetson Bank) since that time. The Mardi Gras wrasse has also been reported from the Vera Cruz region of Mexico. Subsequent investigation by Doug Weaver and sanctuary staff confirmed that it was in fact a previously undescribed species of wrasse.

The scientific name of the species is *Halichoeres burekae*, in honor of FGBNMS photographers (and previous Environmental Heroes) Frank and Joyce Burek, who obtained the first photograph of the fish.



Copies of the paper and more information are available from Emma.Hickerson@noaa.gov
To see the actual article, visit
<http://www.asihcopeiaonline.org/perlserv/?request=get-toc&issn=0045-8511&volume=2007&issue=4>